

AVIAN FLU AND FLU PANDEMIC—GET THE FACTS!

The recent airing of a TV movie about a fictional avian flu outbreak in the U.S. may cause people to worry about H5N1 avian flu and a flu pandemic. (A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of a disease.) It's wise to learn as much as possible, from trustworthy sources, about the avian flu and flu pandemics, so that you can take the proper steps to be prepared in case of a problem. The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) wants everyone to know the facts about avian flu and flu pandemics, so here are some important things to remember (adapted from information provided by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]):

- **There is no influenza pandemic in San Diego, California, the U.S. or the world at this time.**
- **The World Health Organization, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other organizations are all monitoring the avian flu situation closely.**
- **Also, it is important to remember that H5N1 avian influenza is almost exclusively a disease of birds. In order to cause a pandemic like the one in the TV movie, the virus must first mutate into a form which can be passed from person to person. The H5N1 virus has not yet appeared in birds in the U.S.**
- **Should the H5N1 virus appear in the U.S., it does not mean the start of a pandemic.**
- An additional point to remember is that the next influenza pandemic could be much less severe than what the recent TV movie depicts or that occurred in 1918. For example, the influenza pandemics of 1957/58 and 1968/69 caused so much less illness and death than did the 1918/19 pandemic that many Americans at that time did not distinguish them from seasonal influenza and were unaware that a pandemic was underway.
- **While the movie does serve to raise awareness about avian and pandemic flu, we hope it will inspire preparation – not panic.** There are steps individuals, families and communities can take to prepare. You can keep a supply of food and medicines on hand in case you have to stay home. You can also practice good public health measures like frequent hand washing, covering your coughs and sneezes and staying home when sick.
- **There is good information about avian flu and pandemic flu available on the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) www.pandemicflu.gov website. Please also visit the County of San Diego HHSA pandemic flu website at www.sdpanicmicflu.org.**
- **For more information, please call the County's Avian and Pandemic Flu Information Line at (619) 515-6900. To report dead birds, please call the County Department of Environmental Health Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888.**
- The film does depict scenarios that could unfold should a severe pandemic ever develop, including limited availability of antiviral medications and vaccines as well as the potential for disruption of supplies, medicines and other essential services.
- The film also illustrates the expected months-long delay in developing an effective vaccine against a pandemic strain of influenza once it emerges. This is why, at the President's request, the Congress approved funding for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to make significant financial investments to improve the technology for vaccine development and to build up our domestic vaccine production capacity, to ensure more rapid availability of vaccine for the population in a pandemic.

- **The film does highlight an important aspect of planning – individual and community planning and cooperation will be so vital to sustaining communities and neighborhoods during an extended wave of an influenza pandemic.** The federal government has developed an extensive set of planning documents, including planning checklists for businesses, schools, health care providers, community organizations and states as well as an **individual and family planning guide**. All of these materials are available at www.pandemicflu.gov.

AVIAN FLU AND PANDEMIC FLU RESOURCES

County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency

www.sdpanemicflu.org

Avian and Pandemic Flu Information Line: (619) 515-6900

Department of Environmental Health Vector Control Program: (858) 694-2888
(to report dead birds)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (federal)

www.pandemicflu.gov

www.cdc.gov

CDC INFO Hotline: (800) CDC-4636 (800-232-4636)

State of California Department of Health Services

<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/>

World Health Organization

www.who.int